

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 CU-02 /029 W

-----110837Z 121202 /11

R 110642Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3147

INFO AMCONSUL MANDALAY

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 0685

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BM

SUBJ: STUDENT UNREST

SUMMARY: A UNIVERSITY STUDENT ARTIST AND A STUDENT POET HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BECAUSE OF A CRYPTO-SEDITION MATTER IN THE RANGOON UNIVERSITY STUDENT ANNUAL, AND THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED RUMORS OF OTHER UNIVERSITY ARRESTS AT MANDALAY. THERE IS A SOMEWHAT LESS THAN 50-50 POSSIBILITY OF CAMPUS DISTURBANCES WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO AMCONSUL MANDALAY, AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF MANDALAY ARTS AND SCIENCE (MASU) STUDENTS AND ONE FACULTY MEMBER ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN LATE FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH FOR DISTRIBUTING POLITICJETPAMPHLETS. ANTI-NE WIN LEAFLETS AND POSTERS WERE ALSO DISTRIBUTED AT RANGOON ARTS AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY (RASU) BEFORE THE BSPP PARTY CONGRESS. ALTHOUGH NO ARRESTS ARE KNOWN IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAFLETS AND POSTERS, TWO RASU STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT ART WORK WHICH APPEARED IN THE RASU ANNUAL STUDENT AMAGAZINE.

2. THE RASU ANNUAL MAGAZINE HAS BECOME A HOT ITEM IN RANGOON. THE STUDENTS ARE EXCITED ABOUT HAVING SLIPPED AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT COVER PAINTING AND POEM PAST GUB CENSORS.

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THE POLICE ARE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW THIS HAPPENED AND WHY IT TOOK TWO MONTHS FOR UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS TO NOTICE. THE ARREST OF THE ARTIST AND POET RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OFFENDING PIECES HAS CAUSED A SERIES OF RUMORS ABOUT DEMONSTRATIONS BEING ORGANIZED BEFORE EXAMINATIONS BEGIN ON MARCH 21.

3. THE TIMING OF THESE INCIDENTS IS SIGNIFICANT IN THAT THEY COME JUST AFTER A RATHER DISAPPOINTING PARTY CONGRESS AND JUST BEFORE FINAL EXAMINATIONS. THE PARTY CONGRESS FAILED TO PASS THE KIND OF DRAMATIC ECONOMIC REFORMS THAT WERE HOPED FOR BY MANY BURMESE, AND SPECULATION ON POSSIBLE STUDENT REACTION HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD. STUDENTS ARE ALSO AWARE THAT THEY CAN POSTPONE FINAL EXAMINATIONS INDEFINITELY BY DEMONSTRATING WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AND FORCING YET ANOTHER SHUTDOWN OF THE UNIVERSITIES. SOME STUDENT WOULD WELCOME THIS DELAY.

4. COMMENT: A MAJORITY OF STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS PROBABLY OPPOSE ANY RESUMPTION OF CAMPUS DEMONSTRATIONS BECAUSE THIS WOULD DELAY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ONCE AGAIN. THE GUB IS CERTAINLY DOING ALL IT CAN TO PREVENT MORE TROUBLE, SINCE VIOLENCE WOULD CREATE YET MORE SOCIAL DISRUPTION AND PROVIDE MORE MARTYRS AS OPPOSITION RALLYING POINTS. ANTI-GUB DEMONSTRATIONS SO SOON AFTER THE THIRD PARTY CONGRESS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY EMBARRASSING.

5. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT THESE FACTORS WILL NOT KEEP STUDENTS QUIET. THE GUB IS EMBARRASSED (AND STUDENTS A LITTLE SMUG) ABOUT THE RASU ANNUAL MAGAZINE INCIDENT, AND POLICE AUTHORITIES WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO PUT STUDENTS IN THEIR PLACE. A MINORITY OF STUDENTS SEE THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AS SO WORTHLESS AND THEIR FUTURES SO BLEAK THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO RISK ALMOST CERTAIN ARREST TO MAKE A CLEAR POLITICAL STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO THE GUB. BURMESE EXPERIENCE SINCE 1962
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SUGGESTS THAT THESE DEMONSTRATIONS, IF THEY DO OCCUR, ARE NOT LIELY TO PRODUCE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL CHANGES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENTS, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977RANGOO00685
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: RANGOON
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Image Path:
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3134628
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENT UNREST SUMMARY: A UNIVERSITY STUDENT ARTIST AND A STUDENT POET HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BECAUSE OF A CRYPTO-SEDITION MATTER
TAGS: PINT, PINS, BM
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/abc2bab9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009